

I am deeply concerned about the recent comments by Powell, which to my mind has the mark of someone who hasn't been previously very aware of these issues.

Setting aside the provisions of the 1996 Telecommunications Act will simply work to prolong the monopolies of the Baby Bells, and will do nothing to encourage broadband access.

Broadband has several big obstacles to overcome. Among them:

(1) The artificially high cost of bandwidth, a cost set by the major telcos.

(2) Monopoly over the last-mile rights, which drives up prices even more.

(3) The shoddy service provided by most of the telcos and cable companies. I would like to elaborate on this a bit more. The sheer quantity of disinformation provided by firms like AT&T Broadband (back when I was experimenting with cable) and Qwest (when I was trying to get DSL through them) was staggering. Service from these firms has always been questionable; you only have to go to the Seattle Utilities Commission to find hundreds if not thousands of complaints filed against the people who hold the last-mile rights hostage in this city. Qwest (previously US West) took many deliberate actions to drive up the price of competitors' DSL offerings, which priced Covad out of the range of most people, and helped drive them to bankruptcy. (Not the sole reason, of course, but a significant contributor.)

(4) Spam, which swamps networks in sort of a corporate denial-of-service attack.

Please don't set aside the provisions of the Telecommunications Act. Such a move would make me seriously wonder whether the FCC is truly working for the people it ostensibly supports.